DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 137 150 SO 009 799

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TITLE Indoctrination and Believing.
PUB DATE Dec 76
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association (Boston, Massachusetts, December 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Freedom; Change Strategies; Dogmatism; *Educational Objectives; *Educational Philosophy; Educational Responsibility; Educational Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Instructional Design; Logical Thinking; Models; *Moral Development; *Philosophy
IDENTIFIERS *Indoctrination

ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the relationships among indoctrination, education, believing, and action in order to inform students and teachers of methods of openly and collectively guarding against indoctrination in the American school system. Four conditions for distinguishing indoctrination from education are: (1) intent of the teacher; (2) truth or falsity of content; (3) method of teaching; and (4) context of teaching, i.e., the existence of reward or punishment in the situation. A conceptual and political strategy illustrates a way of distinguishing between indoctrination and moral education. The first rule admonishes the teacher to do whatever is possible on an individual basis, for example, eliminating the condition of reward or punishment. The second rule suggests action up to the limit of incurring institutional repression, followed by rule three which recommends sharing matters one can't handle oneself with those existentially concerned, including students. Rule four states that both student and instructor views comply with a truth value which can be established as true because all its component parts are true. In conclusion, when the rules of procedure are followed, education instead of indoctrination will occur because students and teachers establish conditions that promote rationality (mutuality) in an effort to discover what they want to believe and how they want to act in accordance with those beliefs. (Author/DB)

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INDOCTRINATION AND BELIEVING

Prepared for Delivery to
Subcommittee on Pre-College Philosophy
the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division
December 1976

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INDOCTRINATION AND BELIEVING

This paper consists of a philosophical point entirely surrounded by snippets from a political-metaphysical theory—a set of ideas so grand that it takes my breath away sometimes just to contemplate it. I try not to let reverence becloud reasoning. If I have done so, I should surely appreciate being instructed in the error of my ways. It is ways of acting and not mere beliefs which are in question here, for the small point turns out to be concrete reason for taking a political step, which political step is independently justifiable to reason on apparently quite unrelated prudential grounds. But to make the story intelligible I must pick it up at the beginning of this semester.

I

"Indoctrination" is a topic which has to be dealt with somehow in any book entitled "Philosophy of Education." It's one of the few topics which has sustained serious, critical interchange among scholars in that branch of philosophy (McClellan, 1976, pp. 139-151). The literature, boiled down possibly past the point of intelligibility, sort of renders four conditions for distinguishing indoctrination from education:

a. Intent (personal or institutional): When the intent of the teacher in a pedagogical interaction is to get students to believe something, as opposed, say, to trying to get them to look at, examine, consider, think about something, learn how to do something (insofar as that can be separated from acquiring certain beliefs, which isn't very far, I discover)--you can't be sure that it's not indoctrination.[1]

b. Content:

b1: If the belief you're teaching (what it is that you want your students to come to believe) "if not false, is at least not known to be true" (A. G. N. Flew as cited in McClellan above), you can't be sure that you're not indoctrinating.

b2: If the beliefs you're trying to teach are basic, you can't be sure..."Basic" has no precise epistemological meaning here and needs none; we're talking about beliefs that affect wide ranges of personal conduct, beliefs which influence our very perception of the world and thus resist change in the flux of day-to-day experience, beliefs which figure in the way a person responds to "What are you?" (Communist, Christian, Conservative, etc.).

c. Method: If the teaching-learning interaction takes its focus and direction from the teacher's intention that students come to believe something, you can't be sure...

d. Context: If the teaching-learning interaction occurs in a context such that the teacher has the power to reward or punish students for a number of actions, including actions which indicate acceptance or non-acceptance of the beliefs the teacher is trying to get across, you can't be sure that what's going on is not better called "indoctrination" than "education."

When "indoctrination" is treated as a concept to be defined rather than a problem to be solved, those conditions seem to define it accurately enough. When all of them are satisfied, you can pretty well be sure that it <u>is</u> indoctrination; it puts far too fine a point on it to say that they're individually necessary and jointly sufficient.

That's the way things stood in the literature when I reviewed it.

My contribution was to pose a sort of existence proof: some consistently imaginable state of affairs is such that none of the conditions for indoctrination are satisfied, while education clearly is going on. A victory for the imagination in its constant struggle against the forces of irrationality and despair? I rather wished to think so when I wrote that section, but I was conscious even then that my treatment of the topic was (to be generous) weak.

The reason I took the line I did is that I had never confronted indoctrination as a practical, personal problem. It was simply one of the topics that I had to deal with. I had encountered indoctrination as a political issue, but only in trying to protect some people from other people's indoctrination. (I did not try to protect myself politically from the indoctrination I received officially as part of my training toward an ensign's commission in W.W. II. My recruitment to the Revolution began much later than that).

Thus my "solution" was to think of a set of conditions under which indoctrination simply could not occur.

Sparing you all the autobiographical details (some of the bibliographical details are listed as Section 2 in references), let me put it bluntly: when I confronted my class in "Social Foundations of Education" this fall, the first undergraduates I have undertaken to teach in twenty (?) years, I was awakened from my complacent, if not exactly dogmatic, slumber. The conditions for indoctrination were satisfied in this case. I did want those thirty young men and women to give up many of the basic beliefs they acquired in going through the System. I wanted them to accept a set of basic beliefs they have there been explicitly taught to reject. Failing a number of tests, those beliefs are "not known to be true." But I want the students

to believe them, which is to believe them to be true. I do direct the activities of the class to achieve that end, using whatever pedagogical skill I have gained from years in the trade. And my teaching does occur in an institutional context which gives me a totally indefensible power to reward or punish. It's no good to say that I can imagine a set of conditions under which no condition for indoctrination is satisfied; I was faced with a condition in which they all are, or at least seem to be. What do we do now, coach?

Two courses of action are open to the radical teacher at this fork in the road. The easy path is to deny that education (particularly the sort of moral-political education I wish to be engaged in) can be shown to be different from indoctrination, not, at least, different in ways that transcend particular political point of view. (Consider this formula: Education /what I do/ is getting the younger generation to accept true beliefs, while indoctrination /what They do/ is forcing youth to accept false beliefs. Any distinction which reduces to that formula fails on the test of transcending particular political point of view.)

The other fork leads onto a path that cannot be negotiated without a workable distinction between indoctrination and education. Why should we bother? It has proved a very difficult distinction to draw clearly in practical, historical cases; there is a formal reason why that is so. Consider the form in which the definition of indoctrination is given above. A set of conditions, C, is related to the term T according to the following paradigm:

> If any member of C, you have a right to suspect that T is the appropriate description of the situation.

For this case, let C include (a, b_1, & b_2, c, d.) above, and T =

"indoctrination." It is obvious that that paradigm expresses the relation of disease and symptom (among other relations) but does not express the relation of definiens and definiendum. And the conditions are described in such broad terms that "indoctrination" can be suspected in any politically sensitive teaching episode. Thus it seems foolish to pursue the analysis of a term so hopelessly ill-formed and vague.

It is no wonder, then, that many of our comrades have simply ignored the concept of indoctrination. In explaining how it is that "society's trip is successfully laid on its new members," Bowles and Gintis write, the "educator must represent society in mediating the contradiction between individual and community to fulfill his or her institutional role. Or unwilling, he or she must make war on social institutions and, by opposing them, change them." (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, pp. 273-4) They then proceed, with some very sane and sensible remarks, to present a framework for further practical discussion about how to oppose and change our social institutions, i.e. how to take part responsibly in bringing about the (socialist) Revolution. Among other things we cannot do consistently with our purposes, Bowles and Gintis remind us, we "cannot subordinate means to ends and cannot manipulate and deceive to achieve success," not if we are to promote the Revolution, i.e. "promote democracy, participation, and a sense of solidarity and equality." (p. 283) But among their sane and sensible remarks one finds no mention at all of indoctrination, neither to espouse it nor to reject it. It just didn't seem to Bowles and Gintis a useful notion. And the same, I rather think, holds true for the other serious left-wing scholars whose works have brought the Revolution right to the core of the institution we serve, study, and seek to change.

It's hard to estimate whether the above accurately represents Bowles

and Gintis's reasons for not raising the issue of indoctrination. Surely they must have thought about it if they have been teaching the same stuff that they have been writing. For the beliefs they express oblige them to try to get their students to accept those same beliefs. And students will raise the cry, "That's just your opinion!" If they don't raise it aloud, something's amiss, as Bowles and Gintis would insist. And so they had to confront the question: - "Just how do we want to draw the line separating those pedagogical practices that are acceptable ways of promoting the Revolution from those that are not?" And they answered, I take it, up to the limits of subordinating "means to ends," more specifically, to the point that one comes to "manipulate and deceive," which means, in effect, that indoctrination is OK.

But I would beg our comrades, including Bowles and Gintis, to re-consider. Below (II) I present a conceptual and political strategy for making the distinction between indoctrination and education. But let me preface that bit of argument with this appeal to prudence. I'm fairly convinced by what I've seen close to home in the Empire State that retrenchment has been accompanied by discrimination against leftist scholars and branches of study (whether or not political bias can be proved in the cases now pending.[2]) We will be in a much stronger position here if we can face the issue of indoctrination fairly, for the traditions of academic freedom in the name of which we appeal for justice to scholars, both individually and collectively--those traditions presuppose a distinction between education and indoctrination. The students' share of academic freedom is protection against indoctrination.

Under most collective bargaining contracts, it's almost impossible to fire a reasonably competent and industrious teacher for cause on a charge of

indoctrination. What happens in the State University of New York is that divisions, departments, or programs which have a heavy admixture of left-wing teachers are eliminated in toto by management prerogative. The fact that "indoctrination" is not mentioned in the Chancellor's press releases does not mean that the issue is dead.

I am not advocating that we instruct our negotiating team to seek a right-to-indoctrinate clause in our next contract. That won't be, shouldn't be a negotiable item. Even if such a clause succeeded in stopping the witchhunt, which is doubtful, it would leave us in the stance of having accepted their right to indoctrinate—if they or we can. Holding the keys to the kingdom (access to the means of production), our opponents can and do and will continue to indoctrinate successfully in course after course required for the employment credentials issued by the School of Business, of Criminal Justice (sic), of Education (sic), and other, also sick, professional schools.

In short, it is not prudential for us to acquiesce in the erosion of academic freedom, even though the defense of that freedom requires that we reject the right to indoctrinate and accept the right of students to be protected (more importantly, to protect themselves) against indoctrination. As in so many other arenas of political struggle today, we must seek a popular front with the liberal defenders of traditional rights. and the traditional rights of academic freedom have presupposed a distinction between indoctrination and education. Thus prudence inclines us where principle (if the arguments below are sound) dictates we should go.

II

So here is how things stand: It is a matter of practical, political

importance to be able to distinguish between indoctrination and moral education. It is especially important for those of us who wish to bring the Revolution into the University without compromising the integrity of either. The philosophical literature to which we might turn seems, at first glance, hopelessly abstract, idealistic in the bad, i.e. in the metaphysical, sense of the term. It seems to say merely that there is the possibility of an educational process free from indoctrination. But as Quine said somewhere, all possibilities are grey in the dark; and in the dark is where we stand.

But let us look again at the summary of literature above. If we clean up our ontology (give up our foolish belief that there are such things as concepts which can be analyzed), and if instead we look upon the literature on indoctrination as a collective effort to think through a practical, political problem we all face in one way or another, then things start to clear up rather quickly. (I presume to call all those who participate in such a collective effort "comrades" or "colleagues" without distinguishing between the terms--until I'm forced to.)

The first rule of the Revolution is: When you face a practical, political problem, don't agonize--analyze! In respect of indoctrination, that rule has certainly, even slavishly been obeyed. It remains only to take the analysanda, together with certain other rules of the Revolution, and turn them into a plan of action. Leaving agony aside, here is how it goes:

Rule: Distinguish clearly what you can do yourself from what you require collective effort to accomplish.

The only condition that I could change by myself was the last one, the power to reward or punish. So the first thing I did with the class

was to try to convince them that everyone who succeeded in getting his or her name on the class list as prepared by the computer (no small achievement, you will grant) and stayed alive till the end of the semester would find the "S" by his or her name at the end of the term. Are there other ways in which I could reward or punish those students? In future letters of reference for employment or graduate school, perhaps? I ask each student who thinks that he or she might wish such a letter to write a self-evaluation of work done in the class, which self-evaluation I will gladly send off, as just what it is, to whomever. Are there still other ways? Perhaps. If they are large enough to be worth worrying about, we will find ways to eliminate them. The goal, I've come to see, is to make the classroom a mere convenience for an encounter free of the repressive elements which the System takes to be necessary for education. (For a beautiful presentation of that goal, see B. D. Komisar & Associates, 1976.)

Now those actions of mine accord with another rule: Act up to the limits that you (and all those in the same institutional role as you) can act without incurring institutional repression. (That is a positive moral obligation on all supporters of the Revolution; duties of supererogation begin well beyond the application of this rule.) In this case, my actions in conformity to this rule can and should be the institutional norm for all those who teach in areas of great political sensitivity. How to make it so is a matter for another symposium.

Another rule of the Revolution: What you can't handle yourself, you share with those existentially concerned. In this case, the problems of indoctrination require, as I shall show, logically require, a collective effort of the class, including the instructor. Look at the three other conditions: (a) intent, (b_1 & b_2) beliefs, (c) method. Let me say a word

about each.

(a) I intend that they come to accept certain beliefs, etc. I do not intend to indoctrinate them in those beliefs. So I say to the other members of the class: "I want you to come to share these beliefs. But I don't want to indoctrinate you in those beliefs. So what can we do about it?"

And then, notice, it doesn't matter at all whether what we do works well or poorly. My intent has been achieved: I am sharing with them my belief in the power of uncoerced groups to work together to solve their own problems. We yell at each other, we seek debates with outside professors who have different beliefs, we conduct surveys of campus opinions, etc. My lack of skill and order prevents most of those efforts from succeeding as well as they might. But the principle is clear enough.

And, notice, we have taken care of (c) as well. I directed the attention of the class to a certain set of beliefs and practices (the American /"educational"/ System) and asked them: What do we want to do about this mess? From that point on, the "we" expands gradually to include the whole American people, eventually the whole human race. And thus my control and direction is lost, well lost. There can be no such things as assignments, requirements, etc., except as those grow out of our collective effort. (Again, doing it and doing it well are two different things. We need lots of practice.)

b_1. Now here's where the small philosophical point becomes the key to the whole thing. I want my students to believe in the Revolution. They do not believe in the Revolution. Most of them don't believe in the System either. Not believing in anything and (for many, quite consciously) not wanting to believe in anything is a complex mental state which has worked

well for most of these students. They've been successful (though, God knows, they don't feel successful) in playing the System's game so far. "Why should I change my beliefs?" each student must ask. The System's approach at this point is to "motivate" students to learn, i.e. to change their beliefs. That's vicious nonsense, a euphemism disguised coercion. Retaining the power to reward or punish, an instructor can "motivate" his or her students to make it appear that beliefs have changed. But by itself, "Because McClellan wants me to" is no reason at all for a student to believe in the Revolution or anything.

The philosophical point has thus been made. It remains only to translate it into the common coin of our theory of the world (OTOTW), to borrow a most pregnant phrase from Prof. Quine (1974. See McClellan and Costello, 1976) I have used the expression "believe in _____" throughout this discussion, because that is the form in which doctrinal beliefs tend to come; certainly that is the form in which they have been, are being, will be indoctrinated into billions (?) of innocent children. "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ His Only Son..." "I believe in the Sanctity of Life" (What a macabre joke that one is!) "I believe in The Neighborhood School...in the White Race... in the Presidency..." The list goes on indefinitely. It seems to my students that I am asking them to substitute one set of slogans for another. And they ask, quite rightly, "Why should I? The ones I've got work well enough for me."

But when we (philosophers, now) talk about beliefs, we mean B_AP, A believes that P, that so-andso is the case. To hold our theory of the world (whatever may be the case with the Weltanschauung of Christians, some Marxists and Maoists, existentialists and others) requires that we accept

no "I believe in X" unless we can translate it without remainder into a set (even if non-finite set) of sentences, "I believe that P, Q...etc."

Thus we have taken the first step toward satisfying the truth condition which Flew correctly saw as necessary to the distinction between indoctrination and education. Those beliefs which are typically indoctrinated into children come in a form which precludes a truth value. Rule of the Revolution: To educate our young comrades consistently with OTOTW, we must insure that the beliefs they come to hold sustain a truth value.

I'll spare you some of the struggle it takes in our class to make students' and instructor's beliefs comply with that rule. But it is, so far as I've been able to discover, only through the struggle of contrary and conflicting beliefs that that rule gets satisfied. It's a lot more comforting to contemplate how grand a thing is the Revolution than it is to say exactly what I believe and to say it in ways that invite criticism and correction from my younger comrades whose experience I cannot hope to share otherwise.

But when that rule is followed, the problem of motivating change of belief is solved. Students will insist, correctly: I have a right to my opinion, even if it is false! (It is a telling commentary on the generally indoctrinative character of our schools that liberated students have learned to insist on that right.) Once that right is fully acknowledged and reason is restored, different questions arise: Do I want to hold that opinion? Why? At this point, another rule of the Revolution can be appealed to: The value accruing to a person for believing that P should be exactly proportional to the truth of P. Thus we have to set things up so that no stigma attaches to holding a minority view, but no privileged role as "character" or clown goes with it either. Given the logical structure of

OTOTW, there can be no soothing: "Believe first, understanding will follow."

(This last rule is enormously difficult to follow in a large class. It is possible at all only to the extent that the class as a whole can take responsibility for following it. Again, we need lots more practice.)

That is all I know to say about the truth condition--that beliefs be in such form that they can be true or false; and that the only motive one would have for believing or disbelieving P is that P appears (given the evidence, personal experience, etc.) to be true or false. To translate those logical requirements that distinguish education from indoctrination into workable pedagogical practices is possible only (if at all) as an open, collective endeavor. Why? you ask. Because of the logic of slogans, if you like. (B. P. Komisar et al., 1961). What substantive beliefs, beliefs that so-and-so is the case, has one committed oneself to when one believes in the Revolution, in "democracy, participation, and a sense of solidarity and equality," etc." The question cannot be answered by anyone except the person who has come to accept that belief. And he or she cannot know how to answer except by testing it out--by careful analysis of very recondite statistical arguments, by trying to convince others in an atmosphere of cooperative endeavor, by taking direct political action, and so on. Thus providing one's own interpretation or translation of such a belief, saying what, e.g., one's belief in the Revolution (or the Counter-revolution) means, is something one has to do for oneself. The path to self-knowledge leads through that lonesome valley while indoctrination shunts the student to a dead end.

b_2. About "basic" I try to be brief. I take it that moral education is really a very simple matter, conceptually speaking. We are engaged in moral education whenever in full self-consciousness--we set out to discover

what we want to do. We are helping members of the younger generation toward their own moral education when we establish with them conditions that promote rationality (mutuality) in their effort to discover what they want to do. The objective is to make our wanting as rational as possible, given OTOTW. And we can never, literally never, rationally want to do Y because of (an untranslated) belief in X. "I (We) believe in X" just doesn't fit into practical reasoning.

1. I (We) believe that I (we) want Z.
2. " " believe Y is the only action which will yield Z.

∴ 3. ⌜Y⌝

That's the simplest form in which practical reason works (the Barbara of practical reason); to make that form work rationally in practice, however, is an enormously difficult endeavor, requiring lots of practice, discipline, order--the sorts of personal and collective virtues and benefits that moral philosophers form Aristotle on have tried to analyze and exemplify.[3]

Thus in OTOTW it is never the case that "I believe in X" is a basic belief, as it is apparently in the theories of the world held by some Christians and suchlike.[4]

Nor is OTOTW grounded in any foundational beliefs of an epistemic sort. An individual may believe <u>in</u> the evidence of his senses, let us say. But that translates into rational collective deliberation as: I believe <u>that</u> my senses are generally reliable under normal conditions, etc., which belief is no more foundational than any other. (Alston, 1976)

Belief in uninterpreted moral rules fares no better. I believe <u>that</u> we will have much greater success in finding out what we want if we follow certain rules of procedure (e.g. those given above as Rules of the Revolution.) And I believe that we will discover that we get what we want only if we

rule out some actions by an argument which is rather like a contrapositive to the version of the practical syllogism given above. Consider:

4. But Y involves treating some persons strictly as means to the satisfaction of other persons' wants.

$\sim[(1 \& 2) \& \sim 3]$

But 4

$\therefore \sim 3$

$\therefore \sim (1 \& 2)$

But 2

$\therefore \sim 1$

How, you ask, does ~ 1 follow from 2 & 4? By the same kind of logic that 3 follows from 1 & 2. If the latter (an action, not just a further belief) doesn't follow for you, comrade, then I'm not sure that we share the same mammalian (to draw it quite narrowly) theory of the world; for species much simpler than mammalian have that argument built into the very wiring diagram of their central nervous system. In its more general, i.e. wiring diagram, form, please note, 2 has to be modified into something like this: Y is the only means within the range of sensory cues to get Z, and Y has been checked against cautionary circuits with no reported short-circuits. (Cf. Scientific American articles on the way that circuitry works on simpler organisms. It's understood in great detail in e.g. frogs.) In human beings that more general form would come out as:

2.1 Y is the only relatively certain means for getting Z that I can think of without putting more effort into it than Z would be worth.

2.2 And Y involves no apparent risks worth mentioning.

Now consider another mammalian species, Homo Ludens, which was like

Homo Sapiens in every respect save one: among the Homo Ludens a "person" who believed 1 & 2.1 & 2.2 would be no more inclined to believe

3.1 We (I) ought to do Y.

than to hold any other belief nor to do Y than to do anything else.

In an environment of scarce resources, the relative survival capacity of Homo Sapiens and Homo Ludens would favor the former to such an extent that by this time in the history of the competition between the two, the latter would have become extinct. And so, dear comrade mammalian, whether you can understand my words or not, you cannot fail to know how to draw the proper conclusion to actual cases of argument in form 1 & 2.1 & 2.2.

Now, can we assume that knowing how to draw the right conclusion to the (sort of) contrapositive, (1 & 2 & 4 are a practically inconsistent triad) is equally widespread in the mammalian population? No, indeed. I am acquainted with no other animal species which builds (that species' version of) 4 into its set of cautionary circuits. No species, including our own, has 4 $\therefore \sim$(1 & 2) genetically wired into its theory of the world. But then there is a great deal of OTOTW which isn't wired into the central nervous system of any species, again including our own. It gets into us through history, through learning, study, work, struggle, practice, love, trust, and lots of other sorts of experience.

What we have to ask, again and always, is the practical question: under what conditions does it turn out that people <u>do</u> put considerations like 4 into the cautionary circuits of 2.2? The branch of OTOTW which treats that question with full scientific seriousness is called the Revolution. Most psychologists, being (more or less consciously) prostitutes to the status quo, do not contribute much to that branch of OTOTW, but there are exceptions. (Staub, 1976)

In moral education, then, what beliefs are basic? Why those beliefs most firmly established in OTOTW as a whole, of course. That's the simplest lesson to be learned from the last decade of work in the philosophy of science, but there are others.

Summary:

When we bring material like that of Bowles and Gintis, material which makes it impossible to believe in the moral and social worth of the American School System (which includes universities), when we bring such material into the System we incur a special obligation to guard against indoctrination. Consistently with OTOTW, there is only one way to do that--by involving the students openly and collectively in protecting themselves against indoctrination, whether from us or, far more importantly, from the cynicism which the System has indoctrinated into them since kindergarten. Those whose defense against indoctrination is to believe in nothing are overripe converts to Fascism, waiting only to be plucked. Indoctrination, comrades, is a serious business.

FOOTNOTES

1. You will note the absence of any success condition for indoctrination. Unlike education, indoctrination can be treated as analogous to inoculation: there are two quite separate questions, (i) Did you receive indoctrination?...an innoculation? (ii) Did it take? "Schooling" separates nicely into those two questions, but when "education" is taken as a term contrasting with, rather than as equivalent to, schooling, it doesn't separate that way at all. As I am often reminded, I may never know what the effect of a pedagogical encounter is on the student. But that doesn't mean that I cannot make a fairly clear determination whether I'm engaged in education or indoctrination.

2. For more details, please contact The Faculty Action Committee of SUNY/ Empire State College, 300 Park Avenue South, 8th Floor, New York City, 10010.

3. Which doesn't mean that only simpleminded problems can be expressed in this form. Suppose we consider the relation between the world order that the Revolution is out to build and the "unavenged tears" of the innocent people who will suffer in that process. The question was posed by Ivan Karamazov to Alyosha in terms of one verions of a Christian theory of the world. (Dostoevsky, Part II, Book 5, Chap. 4) It's instructive to translate Ivan's question into language and beliefs consistent with OTOTW; the distinction between 'avenged' and 'unavenged' drops out, for example, and other distinctions appear.

4. This paper was intended to be a refutation of Donald Vandenberg. But when I look more deeply, I'm not sure we're in disagreement. Vandenberg writes: "Martin Luther King, Jr....tried in various convincing and persuasive ways to waken the dream, and so...we are willing to say he truly believed in his dream. The absence of similar actions /by/ those who say that the American Dream is dead would thus indicate that their statement represents their own decision to stop believing in the American Dream. In this case one can question whether they believed in the Dream in the first place" (1975, p. 304) OK. But if one can decide to believe or to stop believing in X, then the belief in X is not basic. The beliefs that, consistently concatenated, constitute OTOTW are not the sort of thing one can decide to believe or to stop believing. I cannot, e.g. decide to believe or to stop believing that I am writing this sentence, though I can decide whether to write it or not. When I decide to believe in Jones despite some evidence of his untrustworthiness, I do so, if I am rational, on the basis of other beliefs which are not matters of decision. We can decide what slogan-like phrases best pull together our beliefs that bear on particular problems, political and other. But for no such X can "I believe in X" be a basic belief. I hope Vandenberg agrees.

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